

**A<sup>-</sup> VA<sub>√</sub> NE<sup>√</sup> LEU<sub>√</sub> VE:**  
**A LAHU NYI (RED LAHU) RITE TO PROPITIATE THE**  
**SPIRIT OF AN ABANDONED BUDDHIST SHRINE**

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*1. Introduction*

In this article I describe a rite of spirit propitiation sometimes performed by the Lahu Nyi or Red Lahu, a Tibeto-Burman-speaking hill people of the north Thailand-Burmese Shan State border country<sup>1</sup>. The rite is called A<sup>-</sup> va<sub>√</sub> ne<sup>√</sup> leu<sub>√</sub> ve<sup>2</sup> (A<sup>-</sup> va<sub>√</sub>, the name of a people; ne<sup>√</sup> “spirit”, leu<sub>√</sub> ve “to offer food”). As in previous contribution to this journal<sup>3</sup>, a vital feature here is the presentation, in both the original language and English translation, of several versions of the prayer used in the rite. I believe it is imperative that these texts be published in their original language, not merely in translation. Otherwise they may be lost, not only to oriental scholarship but also to the Lahu people themselves, for those among the Lahu who are heirs to this fascinating oral literature are also the ones who are usually unlettered.

The format of this article follows closely that of my previous contributions to oriental and ethnological periodicals<sup>4</sup>, except that I omit here the introductory material on the Lahu people. Readers interested to learn more about the 390,000<sup>5</sup> or so people of the China-Burma-Laos-North Thailand borderlands<sup>6</sup> who call themselves “Lahu” may refer to Section 2 of my previous *Oriens Extremus* article and to the literature cited there<sup>7</sup>.

*2. The A<sup>-</sup> Va<sub>√</sub> Ne<sup>√</sup>: Spirit of Abandoned Buddhist Shrines*

Among the many different categories of spirit or ne<sup>√</sup> which Lahu Nyi recognize<sup>8</sup>, one is called A<sup>-</sup> va<sub>√</sub> ne<sup>√</sup>, the “Spirit of the A<sup>-</sup> va<sub>√</sub> people”. A<sup>-</sup> va<sub>√</sub> is the name by which most Lahu know the Wa people of the Sino-Burmese border. Among the Lahu Nyi in Thailand this ethnonym is used for peoples in the Thai Kingdom who have linguistic affinities with the Wa, namely the Austro-asiatic-speaking groups whom the Tai peoples<sup>9</sup> call Lawa or Lua<sup>?</sup>. Conventional wisdom among the Lahu Nyi in Thailand is that the A<sup>-</sup> va<sub>√</sub> of this area were, and are, Buddhists like the Tai peoples of the lowlands. Lahu Nyi in Thailand also believe – and there is historical evidence to support them<sup>10</sup> – that it was these A<sup>-</sup> va<sub>√</sub>, rather than any Tai group, who inhabited the mountains before the arrival of people like the Lahu, Lisu, Akha, Karen, Hmong (Meo) and Iu Mien (Yao)<sup>11</sup>. Thus, when Lahu Nyi farmers unearth the remains of a Buddhist shrine, as they sometimes do when preparing their new fields from the mountain forests, they immediately suspect that the location is the preserve of an A<sup>-</sup> va<sub>√</sub> spirit.

The discovery of an old Buddhist shrine does not of itself require the farmer to propitiate the spirit, but should he later fall sick, he may well suspect that the A<sup>-</sup> va<sub>√</sub> spirit is revenging itself for his offense. If his suspicion is confirmed (below, section 3), he will arrange for the performance of a propitiatory rite.

The foregoing account is based on statements of my own Lahu Nyi informants in north Thailand in the late 1960s. For comparison I turn to the writings of an earlier ethnographer of Lahu society, James Haxton Telford. As a member of the American Baptist Missionary Society, Telford – a Scotsman – worked with Lahu in the former

Shan state of Kengtung (now part of the Federated Burmese Shan State) from 1917 to 1942<sup>12</sup>. His principal contribution to Lahu ethnography is a book-length article entitled “Animism in Kengtung State”, which appeared in 1937<sup>13</sup> and is a printed version of his PhD thesis submitted to Edinburgh University in 1933<sup>14</sup>. Although Telford nowhere makes it clear which Lahu division he is writing about, his photographs in the original thesis (which are omitted from the published version) show that he is dealing mostly with the Lahu Na or Black Lahu<sup>15</sup>.

In discussing the various categories of Lahu spirits, Telford mentions the “Aha Ne”<sup>16</sup> ( $A\_ha\_ne^V$ , etym. of  $A\_ha\_$  unknown to me) of which he says there are three kinds:

- (1) *Aha Hkaw Ne* ( $A\_ha\_hkaw\ ne^V$  or  $a\_ha\_$  hill spirit;  $hk'aw$  is “hill”)
- (2) *Aha Mawn Ne* (connected, Telford says, with trees and mountains; I do not know the meaning of *mawn*, but see below)
- (3) *Aha Vahan Ne* ( $A\_ha\_va\_ha\_ne^V$  or “spirit of Buddhist temples”;  $va\_ha\_$  from *viharn*, the main hall of a Buddhist monastery complex in which the day-to-day ritual observances are held)

The Lahu Nyi among whom I worked (whose socio-cultural and linguistic affinities with the Lahu Na are very close) were familiar enough with the  $A\_ha\_ne^V$ , but there the correspondence with Telford’s data seems to end. My Lahu Nyi informants told me of two varieties of  $A\_ha\_ne^V$ : the  $A\_ha\_suh^A\ ta\_ne^V$  or  $A\_ha\_$  tree spirit ( $suh^A$  from  $suh^A\ ceh^V$  “tree”,  $ta\_$  is the classifier for thin wooden objects) and the  $A\_ha\_mvuh^V\ k'aw\ ne^V$  or  $A\_ha\_$  sky spirit ( $mvuh^V\ k'aw$  “sky”:<sup>17</sup> could this be Telford’s *Aha Mawn Ne*?). On no occasion did my informants mention an  $A\_ha\_va\_ha\_ne^V$ . But the attributes of this spirit, as described by Telford<sup>18</sup>, correspond closely to those of  $A^-va\_ne^V$  described by my Lahu Nyi informants. Telford writes:

Aha-Vahan Ne. This is the spirit that dwells in abandoned Buddhist temples and when this malicious demon bites a person (it should be said here that Lahu animists always refer to the spirits as “biting” spirits, “ne cheve” ( $ne^V\ che^A\ ve$ )) he becomes unconscious and is neither able to speak or sleep.

Since the Lahu Nyi division of the Lahu people is almost certainly a relatively recent offshoot from the parent Lahu Na<sup>19</sup>, it is possible that the Lahu Nyi ideas about the  $A^-va\_ne^V$  derive from the Lahu Na conception. Perhaps the Lahu Nyi term “ $A^-va\_ne^V$ ” did not refer originally to the spirit of the  $A^-va\_$  or Wa/Lawa/Lua? people, but was rather a corruption (including tonal shift from  $A\_$  to  $A^-$ ) of the Lahu Na form  $A\_ha\_va\_ha\_ne^V$ , “the spirit of the  $va\_ha\_$  or *viharn*”. This the Lahu Nyi subsequently may have reinterpreted by associating it with the  $A^-va\_$  people. But while I offer these thoughts as a possible explanation for the close correspondence between Telford’s data on the  $A\_ha\_va\_ha\_ne^V$  and mine on the  $A^-va\_ne^V$ , I should nonetheless reiterate that the association which these Lahu Nyi make between old Buddhist shrines in the hills and the Austroasiatic-speaking  $A^-va\_$  people is not without possible historical foundation (refer again to fn. 10).

### 3. Diagnosing an $A^-Va\_Ne^V$ Attack

A Lahu Nyi who falls sick after happening upon an old Buddhist shrine will probably want to confirm his suspicion that he has fallen victim to the  $A^-va\_ne^V$ . This he may do by consulting one of the village spirit specialists or  $ne^V\ te\ sheh\_hpa^V$ , ( $ne^V$  “spirits”,  $te$  “to do, to be concerned with”,  $sheh\_hpa^V$  “master, expert”). Probably there will be several of these men in his village, although not all of them will be capable of diagnosing

an attack of the  $A^-va_\vee$  spirit. This is because a special diagnostic rite is called for and by no means every spirit specialist knows how to perform it. Indeed, in the Lahu Nyi village in which I lived, only one of the four practising  $ne^\vee te sheh\_ hpa^\vee$  professed to be able to handle this rite.

The diagnostic rite is called  $taw^\vee hte^\wedge nyi ve$ , the meaning of which I was unable to discover<sup>20</sup>. It involves an invocation to  $Pi ya^\vee$ , a fierce and powerful spirit regarded as the patron of spirit specialists<sup>21</sup>, and the consultation of a cloth oracle. The person who desires a performance of the rite must first send offerings to the  $ne^\vee te sheh\_ hpa^\vee$ , comprising a cup of uncooked rice grains and a pair of beeswax candles. Having accepted the offerings, the specialist takes his cloth turban and measures on it a length of one *htu*: the distance from thumb-tip to second finger when the hand is stretched out. He now folds the cloth at the point reached by the tip of his second finger, after which he prays to  $Pi ya^\vee$ , saying in effect, "If my client has offended the  $A^-va_\vee ne^\vee$ , let the length of cloth which I have measured out increase; but if no offense has been committed, let the length of measured cloth remain unchanged."<sup>22</sup> At the conclusion of his prayer, the specialist measures his folded cloth. In fact, he takes three measurements, all of which must be the same for him to accept the oracle. If the three measurements reveal no change in the length of the cloth, the spirit specialist takes this to indicate that no offence has been committed towards the  $A^-va_\vee ne^\vee$  and so his client must seek another cause, natural or supernatural, for his affliction<sup>23</sup>. If the measurements indicate that the folded cloth has increased in length (presumably the initial folding as well as the subsequent measuring by hand is sufficiently inaccurate to allow for such a reading to be taken) then the specialist declares that the  $A^-va_\vee ne^\vee$  has indeed been offended and a performance of the propitiatory rite is necessary if the client is to be cured of his sickness.

#### 4. Propitiating the $A^-Va_\vee Ne^\vee$

When it is confirmed that a person has fallen victim to the  $A^-va_\vee ne^\vee$ , he or she must give a pig to the spirit specialist who, in turn, will offer this animal as atonement to the offended spirit. The propitiatory rite takes place near the ruined Buddhist shrine believed to be the spirit's residence. The sick person does not go to this place, but one or two other men will accompany the spirit specialist to help him sacrifice the pig and prepare its carcass.

At my principal study village there were two elders who were recognized as skilled in the propitiation of the  $A^-va_\vee ne^\vee$ . But during the four years I lived with these people, there was not a single case of sickness attributed to this spirit. I could not therefore witness an actual performance of the propitiatory rite. I interviewed the two renowned specialists (both of whom are now dead, which gives me added reason to ensure that the knowledge they imparted to me is not lost) and obtained two rather different descriptions of the ceremony. I shall record each informant's statements in turn. I should note two points: first, that the two men agreed with the information I have given thus far; second, that differences in the manual aspects of ritual (less so in the accompanying prayers) are a common feature of Lahu Nyi ceremonial.

##### (a) *The record of Chaw maw<sup>\vee</sup> Ca<sub>\vee</sub> Taw<sup>-</sup>*

Chaw maw<sup>\vee</sup> (old man) Ca<sub>\vee</sub> Taw<sup>-</sup> told me that while he was quite familiar with the details of the rite to propitiate the  $A^-va_\vee$  spirit, he had never in fact been called upon to perform it. Should he ever be asked, he said, he would charge two *satang*'s weight of

opium for his services<sup>24</sup>. He said that the rite should take place quite close to the Buddhist shrine believed to house the  $A^-va_v$  spirit and it would be to this location that he would take the sacrificial pig provided by his client. He insisted that the pig should be male. At the site for the propitiation,  $Ca_v Taw^-$  said he would erect a small altar, called  $hti_-$ , comprising a woven bamboo shelf supported on four bamboo poles, each rising above the level of the altar and having its exposed end decorated with a cloth or paper streamer called a  $ca_v ca_-$  (fig. 1). The shelf would hold the pork offerings and the  $ca_v$

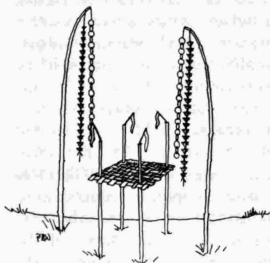


Fig. 1  $Ca_v Taw^-$ 'S ALTAR TO THE  $A^-va_v$  SPIRIT

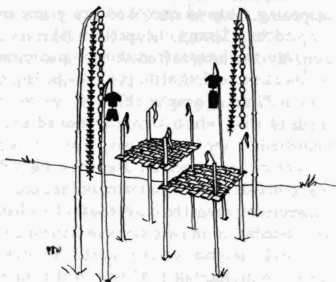


Fig. 2  $EH_LON^-$ 'S ALTAR TO THE  $A^-va_v$  SPIRIT

$ca_-$  were simply decorations to "please the spirit",  $Ca_v Taw^-$  said. Also at the place of the propitiatory rite,  $Ca_v Taw^-$  said he would kill the pig he had brought with him, bludgeoning it to death with a wooden club. Next, with the help of an assistant or two, he would butcher the carcass and roast some portions of it on bamboo spits over a small fire. Then he would put some pieces of roasted pork together with some uncooked flesh on the altar. It is not prescribed, he said, which pieces of the pig's carcass should be so used.  $Ca_v Taw^-$  said he would also smear some of the pig's blood onto the altar, for the spirit liked to drink the blood "like whisky" along with his food<sup>25</sup>. Other offerings which  $Ca_v Taw^-$  would put on the altar along with the meat included ten imitation gold and ten imitation silver coins. These would be pieces of scrap metal from old cooking pots or the like, coated with lime to represent silver or burnt brown to suggest gold. He would also place a little cooked rice and some uncooked rice grains, a few chillies, some salt and an unspecified number of beeswax candles. Finally, at each side of the  $hti_-$ ,  $Ca_v Taw^-$  said he would erect a bamboo pole with two varieties of pendant ( $shaweh_v$ ) hanging from it. The first pendant would be a  $meh ca^v la^v shaweh_v$  or "centipede ( $meh ca^v la^v$ ) pendant", made by folding strips of bamboo into a symbolic centipede. This creature is particularly associated with malicious spirits, perhaps because of the severity of its bite. (It will be recalled that Lahu say of the spirits, not that they attack but that they "bite":  $che_\wedge ve$ .) The second pendant would be a  $na_- g'aw^v na_- ju_v$  or symbolic "earring" pendant, made from rings of shaved bamboo linked into a chain. ( $Na_- g'aw^v na_- ju_v$  is a couplet from  $na_- paw$  "ear" and  $g'aw^v$  "circle", hence "ear circle" or "earring", and  $na_- ju_v$  where  $ju_v$  means the silver or gold tassels which sometimes hang from earrings worn by Lahu women.)  $Ca_v Taw^-$ , like others whom I asked, could

attach no special meaning to the earring pendant beyond stating that it was supposed to "please" the spirit.

With all these offerings prepared and in position, Ca<sub>v</sub> Taw<sup>-</sup> said, everything would be ready for the recitation of the propitiatory prayer. He emphasized that this should be recited preferably in the Shan language, because the A<sup>-</sup> va<sub>v</sub> spirit, a Buddhist foreigner, would not be able to understand Lahu. (Shan is the language of the dominant lowlanders in the Lahu settlement areas of Burma; in Thailand, more recently settled by Lahu, the lowland majority speak the closely related Tai dialect of Kam Muang, the language of the dominant Tai Yuan or Khon Muang people.) Ca<sub>v</sub> Taw<sup>-</sup> said the prayer might be recited in Lahu if the officiating specialist was ignorant of the Shan version, but he himself knew only the Shan text, which went as follows<sup>26</sup>:

#### TEXT ONE (SHAN VERSION)<sup>27</sup>

1. Hpi<sup>-</sup>, hpi<sup>-</sup>, meu li<sup>-</sup> va<sup>v</sup> nga<sup>v</sup> meu mai<sub>do</sub><sup>v</sup>, a<sup>-</sup>, hpeu<sub>v</sub> ngeu<sup>v</sup> hpeu<sub>v</sub> hka<sup>v</sup> lai ma<sup>v</sup> teh<sub>v</sub> teh<sub>v</sub> ne<sup>^</sup>, hpeu<sub>v</sub> ngeu<sup>v</sup> hpeu<sub>v</sub> hka<sup>v</sup> lai ma<sup>v</sup> teh<sub>v</sub> teh<sub>v</sub> ne<sub>v</sub>.
2. Hkao ci<sup>-</sup> ka<sup>v</sup>, hpa<sup>^</sup> ci<sup>-</sup> ka<sup>v</sup> ha hta<sub>^</sub> na<sub>^</sub> shu<sup>-</sup> cao tan<sup>v</sup> lai<sup>-</sup>, a<sup>-</sup>, hpi<sup>-</sup> va<sub>^</sub> kao<sub>-</sub> heu ti shu<sup>-</sup> va<sub>^</sub> kao<sub>-</sub>, hpi<sup>-</sup> va<sub>^</sub> ha<sub>v</sub> k'aw heu shu<sup>-</sup> va<sub>^</sub> ha<sub>v</sub> ne<sub>v</sub>, hpi<sup>-</sup> kao<sub>-</sub> caw<sup>v</sup> kao<sub>-</sub> heu yu<sub>-</sub> ti va<sub>^</sub> kao<sub>-</sub> caw<sup>v</sup> kao<sub>-</sub>.
3. A<sup>-</sup>, ci<sub>v</sub> to<sup>-</sup> lai heu, ci<sub>v</sub> hki<sup>v</sup> lai heu shai<sub>-</sub> cai<sup>-</sup> shai<sub>-</sub> hk'aw<sup>v</sup>, meu nai<sub>v</sub> hkao lan<sup>-</sup> hpa<sup>^</sup> lan<sup>-</sup> lai ma<sup>v</sup>, hkao ci<sup>-</sup> ka<sup>v</sup>, hpa<sup>^</sup> ci<sup>-</sup> ka<sup>v</sup> lai ma<sup>v</sup>, a<sup>-</sup>, ha hta<sub>^</sub> na<sub>v</sub> shu<sup>-</sup> cao tan<sup>v</sup> lai<sup>-</sup> teh<sub>v</sub> teh<sub>v</sub> ne<sub>v</sub>.
4. Hpi<sup>-</sup> tan<sup>v</sup> va<sub>^</sub> aw<sub>-</sub> shu<sup>-</sup> cao tan<sup>v</sup> aw<sub>-</sub> teh<sub>v</sub> teh<sub>v</sub> ne<sub>v</sub>, hpi<sup>-</sup> tan<sup>v</sup> to<sup>^</sup> aw<sub>-</sub> shu<sup>-</sup> cao tan<sup>v</sup> to<sup>^</sup> aw<sub>-</sub>, pen shai<sub>-</sub> cai<sup>-</sup> shai<sub>-</sub> hk'aw<sup>v</sup> meu nai<sub>v</sub>, a<sup>-</sup>, hkao li<sup>-</sup> hpa<sup>^</sup> li<sup>-</sup> lai ma<sup>v</sup>, hkao ci<sup>-</sup> ka<sup>v</sup> hpa<sup>^</sup> ci<sup>-</sup> ka<sup>v</sup> lai ma<sup>v</sup>, ha hta<sub>^</sub> na<sub>v</sub> shu<sup>-</sup> cao tan<sup>v</sup> lai<sup>-</sup> ne<sub>v</sub> ne<sub>v</sub>.

#### TEXT ONE (TRANSLATION)

1. Spirits, spirits<sup>28</sup>, today is a good day; oh I bring for you silver money and golden money, silver money and golden money I really do bring for you.
2. All of you happily eat this rice, eat this relish; oh spirits of this old *viharn*, I give you [these offerings]<sup>29</sup>; spirits of this old *viharn* I give [these offerings] to you here at this old *viharn*; old spirits of this old *viharn*<sup>30</sup>, I give you [these offerings] at this old *viharn* where you live.
3. Oh, I must give you the flesh of this animal, I must give you uncooked flesh; today carefully [I have prepared these offerings], rice cooked in a section of bamboo, relish cooked in a section of bamboo<sup>31</sup> is ready for you; come to eat this rice, come to eat this relish; oh, all of you, come joyfully.
4. Spirits of the east, you who are truly spirits of the eastern side; spirits of the west, all of you of the western side; today [come] joyfully; oh good rice and good relish are ready for you; come to eat this rice and come to eat this relish which are ready for you; joyfully, all of you, come here.

This chant concludes the propitiatory rite. Ca<sub>v</sub> Taw<sup>-</sup> said he and his assistants would now return home bringing with them only the sacrificial pork. Of this, Ca<sub>v</sub> Taw<sup>-</sup> said, he would keep a half for himself, as perquisite for his ritual services, and the other half he would return to the donor's family.

(b) The Record of *Chaw Maw<sup>✓</sup> Eh<sub>-</sub> Lon<sup>-</sup>*

*Chaw maw<sup>✓</sup> Eh<sub>-</sub> Lon<sup>-</sup>* (The Big Old Man) said he had performed the *A<sup>-</sup> va<sub>✓</sub> ne<sup>✓</sup> leu<sub>✓</sub> ve* rite on three occasions, the last being about ten years back (*i.e.* in late 1950s). His fee, he said, was that laid down by tradition, namely one *hteh<sub>^</sub>* (an Indian silver rupee coin)<sup>32</sup> although some clients would give him more than this, he added.

*Eh<sub>-</sub> Lon<sup>-</sup>* agreed with *Ca<sub>✓</sub> Taw<sup>-</sup>* that the rite should take place at the site of the old Buddhist shrine. He differed, however, as to the sex of the sacrificial pig. *Eh<sub>-</sub> Lon<sup>-</sup>* maintained that it would be boar or sow depending on the spirit's wish, and this would be determined by consulting the cloth oracle, *i.e.* by performing the *taw<sup>✓</sup> hte<sub>^</sub> nyi<sub>✓</sub> ve* rite as described above.

Besides the pig sacrifice, other offerings which *En<sub>-</sub> Lon<sup>-</sup>* mentioned as necessary for the propitiatory rite included a miniature set of male and female clothing, *viz.* shorts and trousers (*a<sup>-</sup> po<sub>^</sub>* and *ha<sub>-</sub>*) and blouse and sarong (*a<sup>-</sup> po<sub>^</sub>* and *hteh<sub>^</sub> du*). These, said *Eh<sub>-</sub> Lon<sup>-</sup>*, were for the children of the *A<sup>-</sup> va<sub>✓</sub>* spirit.

At the site for the propitiation, *Eh<sub>-</sub> Lon<sup>-</sup>* said he would erect a double altar (fig. 2) rather than the single *hti<sub>-</sub>* mentioned by *Ca<sub>✓</sub> Taw<sup>-</sup>*. *Eh<sub>-</sub> Lon<sup>-</sup>* said he would decorate the corners of both altars with ritual streamers (*ca<sub>✓</sub> ca<sub>-</sub>*) and on each side would put, not one bamboo pole as mentioned by *Ca<sub>✓</sub> Taw<sup>-</sup>*, but two. To one pole on either side *Eh<sub>-</sub> Lon<sup>-</sup>* said he would attach a centipede pendant and an earring pendant; from the remaining poles he would hang, on one side, a miniature set of male clothing, and on the other a miniature set of female clothing. (He said that it did not matter at all which set of clothing was on which side.)

On each altar *Eh<sub>-</sub> Lon<sup>-</sup>* would place the following additional offerings for the *A<sup>-</sup> va<sub>✓</sub>* spirit: beeswax candles, some imitation silver and some imitation gold pieces, chillies, salt and rice (uncooked grains on the top altar and cooked rice on the lower). All would now be ready, *Eh<sub>-</sub> Lon<sup>-</sup>* said, for the recitation of the propitiatory prayer. *Eh<sub>-</sub> Lon<sup>-</sup>* said he would chant this in Lahu, maintaining that there was no custom that it should be in the Shan language. His words would be as follows:

TEXT TWO (LAHU VERSION)

1. O<sup>-</sup>, O<sup>-</sup>, neh chi yo<sub>✓</sub> law le<sup>✓</sup> k'o<sup>^</sup> k'o, a<sup>-</sup> suh<sup>^</sup> te<sup>✓</sup> hkui ka<sub>✓</sub> haw a<sup>-</sup> va<sub>✓</sub> ne<sup>✓</sup> chi yo<sub>✓</sub> law le<sup>✓</sup> k'o<sup>^</sup> k'o, naw<sub>✓</sub> neh chi aw<sub>✓</sub> ha ha<sub>^</sub> yu<sub>✓</sub> a<sup>-</sup> ve a<sup>-</sup> ha<sub>^</sub> yu<sub>✓</sub> a<sup>-</sup> ve yo<sub>✓</sub> law le<sup>✓</sup> k'o<sup>^</sup> k'o.
2. Ya<sub>^</sub> nyi aw<sub>✓</sub> sheh<sub>-</sub> hpa<sup>✓</sup> va<sub>^</sub> te<sup>✓</sup> hkeh taw<sup>^</sup> lah ka<sub>✓</sub> haw, va<sub>^</sub> te<sup>✓</sup> hkeh taw<sup>^</sup> leh g'a<sup>^</sup> te<sup>✓</sup> ceh taw<sup>^</sup> leh naw<sub>✓</sub> haw<sup>-</sup> naw<sub>✓</sub> hta<sub>^</sub>, yu<sub>✓</sub> hk'aw<sub>^</sub> hk'a<sup>✓</sup> hk'aw<sub>^</sub> la ve k'o<sup>^</sup> k'o-e.
3. A<sup>-</sup>, hteh du te<sup>✓</sup> ceh leh ha<sub>-</sub> eh<sup>-</sup> te<sup>✓</sup> ceh ve yo<sub>✓</sub> law le<sup>✓</sup> k'o<sup>^</sup> k'o, hti<sub>-</sub> ngu<sup>✓</sup> hti<sub>-</sub> hka<sup>✓</sup>, chi ma ve taw<sup>^</sup> leh va<sub>^</sub> chi te<sup>✓</sup> hkeh, a<sup>-</sup>, aw<sub>✓</sub> tcuh<sup>✓</sup> aw<sub>✓</sub> meh te leh naw<sub>✓</sub> hta<sub>^</sub> haw hk'aw<sup>-</sup> g'a ve.
4. Neh chi aw<sub>✓</sub> ha yo<sub>✓</sub> law le<sup>✓</sup> k'o<sup>^</sup> k'o, hk'aw<sub>^</sub> peu la<sup>✓</sup> she<sub>-</sub> ce<sup>✓</sup>, a<sup>-</sup>, ta<sup>✓</sup> gui<sup>✓</sup> ta<sup>✓</sup> hpeh<sup>-</sup> la<sup>✓</sup> ce<sup>✓</sup>, aw<sub>✓</sub> pa<sub>✓</sub> aw<sub>✓</sub> mi<sup>✓</sup>-a ya<sup>✓</sup> ka<sub>✓</sub> du<sub>✓</sub> ka<sub>✓</sub> yo<sub>✓</sub> law le<sup>✓</sup> k'o<sup>^</sup> k'o, ya<sub>^</sub> nyi hkaw<sup>-</sup> lu<sup>-</sup> hkaw<sup>-</sup> tan<sup>^</sup> chi ma ve, va<sub>^</sub> chi taw<sup>^</sup> leh naw<sub>✓</sub> hta<sub>^</sub> k'aw<sub>^</sub> ha<sub>^</sub> k'aw<sub>^</sub> hk'aw<sup>-</sup> la ve yo<sub>✓</sub> law le<sup>✓</sup> k'o<sup>^</sup> k'o.
5. Sha<sub>-</sub> tcuh<sup>✓</sup> sha<sub>-</sub> meh te leh naw<sub>✓</sub> hta<sub>^</sub> ca<sub>✓</sub> la<sup>✓</sup> taw la<sup>✓</sup> ve yo<sub>✓</sub> law le<sup>✓</sup> k'o<sup>^</sup> k'o, ya<sub>^</sub> nyi hpu te<sup>✓</sup> hin<sup>-</sup> te leh yo<sub>✓</sub> law le<sup>✓</sup> k'o<sup>^</sup> k'o, chaw ya<sup>✓</sup> ta ti<sub>^</sub> ta hka<sup>✓</sup> ma<sup>✓</sup> pfuh<sup>✓</sup> leh ho<sup>-</sup> ti<sub>^</sub> ta ti<sub>^</sub> ma<sup>✓</sup> pfuh<sup>✓</sup> leh naw<sub>✓</sub> hta<sub>^</sub> law<sub>✓</sub> hk'aw<sub>^</sub> hk'a<sup>✓</sup> hk'aw<sub>^</sub> g'a ve, aw<sub>✓</sub> tcuh<sup>✓</sup> aw<sub>✓</sub> meh te leh neh<sup>-</sup>-a sheu<sub>-</sub> sha<sub>-</sub> hai<sup>-</sup> te, peh<sub>✓</sub> ca<sup>✓</sup> hti ca<sup>✓</sup> ve yo<sub>✓</sub> law le<sup>✓</sup> k'o<sup>^</sup> k'o,

- nga<sub>v</sub> k'o<sup>^</sup> k'o, hk'a deh<sub>^</sub> ca<sup>^</sup> ta<sup>-</sup> leh naw<sub>v</sub> k'o<sup>^</sup> k'o, hk'a deh<sub>^</sub> ca<sup>^</sup> ta<sup>^</sup> leh ya<sub>^</sub> nyi tan<sub>o</sub> k'ai ve yo<sub>v</sub> law le<sup>v</sup> k'o<sup>^</sup> k'o, neh chi aw<sub>v</sub> ha paweh<sub>-</sub> la<sup>v</sup> va<sup>v</sup> la<sup>v</sup> she<sub>-</sub>.
6. A<sup>-</sup>, va<sub>^</sub> chi te<sup>v</sup> hkeh naw<sub>v</sub> hta<sub>^</sub> leu<sub>v</sub> la<sup>v</sup> leh hpu ka<sub>v</sub> te<sup>v</sup> pa<sup>v</sup> naw<sub>v</sub> hta<sub>^</sub> leu<sub>v</sub> la<sup>v</sup> ve yo<sub>v</sub> law le<sup>v</sup> k'o<sup>^</sup> k'o, hteh du te<sup>v</sup> ceh taw<sup>^</sup> leh ha<sub>-</sub> te<sup>v</sup> ceh taw<sup>^</sup> leh hpu ngeu<sup>v</sup> hpu hka<sup>v</sup> chi ma taw<sup>^</sup> leh naw<sub>v</sub> hta<sub>^</sub> neh chi aw<sub>v</sub> ha hk'a<sup>v</sup> hk'aw<sub>^</sub> g'a ve yo<sub>v</sub> law le<sup>v</sup> k'o<sup>^</sup> k'o, paweh<sub>-</sub> la<sup>v</sup> va<sup>v</sup> la<sup>v</sup> meh<sub>-</sub>, o<sup>-</sup>, o<sup>-</sup>, ya<sub>^</sub> nyi tan<sub>o</sub> k'ai ve yo<sub>v</sub> law le<sup>v</sup> k'o<sup>^</sup> k'o, hph<sup>v</sup> la<sup>v</sup> she<sub>-</sub>.

## TEXT TWO (TRANSLATION)

1. Oh, oh, some time ago at this place, oh A<sup>-</sup> va<sub>v</sub> spirit, you caught the soul of this woman.
2. Today the owner [of this soul] brings for you at this place one pig and one pair of fowl<sup>33</sup> and comes to you to take back [her soul]<sup>34</sup>.
3. Oh a pair of sarongs and two small pairs of trousers<sup>35</sup>, a silver altar and a golden altar, all these offerings she gives to you; from this pig she prepares for you uncooked flesh and cooked flesh and begs your forgiveness<sup>36</sup>.
4. Send back the soul of this woman; do not separate the husband from the wife, do not separate the children<sup>37</sup>; today all these offerings we give to you, this pig we give to you and once again come to beg your forgiveness.
5. Uncooked meat and cooked meat we prepare and give to you; today we make for you one thousand pieces of silver money; we people have no honesty<sup>38</sup>, we pray to you and prepare for you this uncooked meat and this cooked meat; let you and I make friends, let us divide [this meat] and feast together; I shall eat to sufficiency and you will eat to sufficiency and today and hereafter please release the soul of this woman.
6. Oh, this pig we offer to you, these one thousand silver pieces we offer to you; these two sarongs we give to you, these two pairs of trousers we give to you; this silver money and this golden money, all these things we give to you and once again beg of you to release the soul of this woman; oh today and hereafter please release [her soul]

His prayer complete, Eh<sub>-</sub> Lon<sup>-</sup> would now kill and butcher the pig taking care to collect thirty leaf cups (u<sup>-</sup> cu<sub>-</sub> lu<sup>v</sup>) of blood. Fifteen of these blood-filled cups he would place on the upper altar and another fifteen on the lower one. This done, he would set about roasting some of the pork on bamboo spits and when it was cooked he would place some of it, together with the raw pork, on each altar. Eh<sub>-</sub> Lon<sup>-</sup> said that just as people like to eat both cooked and uncooked flesh so too does the A<sup>-</sup> va<sub>v</sub> spirit (but see footnote 36). Having made these final offerings to the Spirit, Eh<sub>-</sub> Lon<sup>-</sup> said, he would be ready for the second part of his propitiatory prayer as follows:

## TEXT THREE (LAHU VERSION)

1. O<sup>-</sup>, O<sup>-</sup>, A<sup>-</sup> va<sub>v</sub> ne<sup>v</sup> ka<sub>v</sub> ve yo<sub>v</sub> law le<sup>v</sup> k'o<sup>^</sup> k'o, ya<sub>^</sub> nyi va<sub>^</sub> chi k'aw<sub>^</sub> ti<sup>v</sup> leh sha<sub>-</sub> tuh<sup>v</sup> sha<sub>-</sub> meh te leh naw<sub>v</sub> hta<sub>^</sub> leu<sub>v</sub> la<sup>v</sup> ve yo<sub>v</sub> law le<sup>v</sup> k'o<sup>^</sup> k'o.
2. Chi<sup>v</sup> beu<sub>^</sub> k'o<sup>^</sup> k'o, a<sup>-</sup>, k'aw<sub>^</sub> pi<sub>-</sub> leh naw<sub>v</sub> ka<sub>v</sub> ca<sup>v</sup> o meh<sub>-</sub>, nga<sub>v</sub> ka<sub>v</sub> ca<sup>v</sup> ve, naw<sub>-</sub> a k'aw<sub>^</sub> ta<sup>v</sup> la<sup>v</sup> ve yo<sub>v</sub> law le<sup>v</sup> k'o<sup>^</sup> k'o, ta yu<sub>v</sub> tu<sub>^</sub> ta yu<sub>v</sub> hk'a<sup>-</sup> pi<sup>v</sup>.

3. Ya<sub>△</sub> nyi yo<sub>▽</sub> law le<sup>▽</sup> k'o<sup>△</sup> k'o, naw<sub>▽</sub> ca<sup>▽</sup> ce<sub>△</sub> daw<sub>▽</sub> ce<sub>△</sub> k'o, nga<sub>▽</sub> ka<sub>▽</sub> k'aw<sub>△</sub> law<sub>▽</sub>, nga<sub>▽</sub> ka<sub>▽</sub> neh<sup>-</sup>-a k'o, sheu-o sha<sub>△</sub> hai<sup>-</sup> te leh aw<sub>▽</sub> chaw<sup>▽</sup> aw<sub>▽</sub> law te da<sub>△</sub> leh ka<sub>▽</sub>, a<sup>-</sup>, naw<sub>▽</sub>-a pe<sub>△</sub> la<sup>▽</sup> ve yo<sub>▽</sub> law le<sup>▽</sup> k'o<sup>△</sup> k'o, naw<sub>▽</sub> ka<sub>▽</sub> hti ca<sup>▽</sup> lao, nga<sub>▽</sub> ka<sub>▽</sub> hti ca<sup>▽</sup> lao, O<sup>-</sup>, O<sup>-</sup>.

### TEXT THREE (TRANSLATION)

1. Oh, oh, A<sup>-</sup>va<sub>▽</sub> spirit here at this place, today I once again slaughter a pig and prepare for you uncooked meat and cooked meat and come to make offerings to you.
2. Now I roast [this flesh] on spits and I give it to you to eat; I also eat and I again give to you to eat; do not punish [this woman's soul].
3. Oh today you eat plentifully and drink plentifully and I once again pray that you and I may be friends together; oh [I] give [this food] to you; you come and eat, I shall come and eat.

This would conclude the rite. According to Eh<sub>△</sub>Lon<sup>-</sup>, he would leave all the offerings at the site. He and his helpers might consume the pork at the site of the sacrifice, but contrary to the account of Ca<sub>▽</sub>Taw<sup>-</sup>, they could not take any back home with them<sup>39</sup>.

### 5. Concluding Remarks

Because I was unable, despite four years' fieldwork with these people, to witness a single performance of the propitiatory rite described above, I cannot with certainty make any judgement on the points of conflict between the accounts of the two specialists. Each is internally consistent and the basic symbolism of both is similar. Ca<sub>▽</sub>Taw<sup>-</sup>'s insistence on using the Shan language is fully explicable in terms of the "foreign" identity of the A<sup>-</sup>va<sub>▽</sub> spirit. It is true these Lahu Nyi view this spirit as belonging to the Wa/Lawa/Lua<sup>?</sup> people rather than to the Tai, but it is also logical that a spirit so obviously "Buddhist" would understand the language of the Buddhist majority, the Tai peoples. (And if, in fact, the spirit is really not the A<sup>-</sup>va<sub>▽</sub>ne<sup>▽</sup> but the A<sub>△</sub>ha<sub>▽</sub>va<sub>▽</sub>ha<sub>▽</sub>ne<sup>▽</sup> or A<sub>△</sub>ha<sub>△</sub> spirit of the *viham*, then the use of a Tai language is even more appropriate).

That there should be differences in liturgical details – the number of altars prepared, the number and amount of the various offerings placed on the altar or altars, whether the pig's blood is put in leaf cups or smeared directly on the altar, and so on – is typical of Lahu ritual practice. In marked contrast to some societies which take care to lay down precisely the ritual sequence a specialist is to follow and exactly how he is to follow it, the Lahu Nyi leave a great deal to the personal whim of the officiating specialist. The content of the prayers tends to be more uniform although, as we have seen, there is a good deal of variation in these too.

I hope I myself or some other person will one day have the opportunity to witness and report upon a performance of the A<sup>-</sup>va<sub>▽</sub> spirit propitiatory rite. Then, perhaps, some of the conflicting statements of my informants might be clarified. Alternatively, I suspect, a third very different version would be placed on record!

### NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> My fieldwork among the Lahu Nyi in the districts of Phrao (Chiang Mai province) and Wiang Pa Pao (Chiang Rai province) was from 1966 to 1970. My thanks are due especially to Khun Wanat Bhruksasri and his staff at the Tribal Research Centre in Chiang Mai. Again, I thank my wife, Pauline Hetland Walker, for her help in preparing this manuscript.



- <sup>2</sup> For information on the transcription of Lahu words, see my "Hk'aw, K'o<sub>v</sub>Ve: A Lahu Nyi (Red Lahu) Rite of Spirit Exorcism", *OE* XXVII, 2, 1980, 227-48, p. 242 fn 11.
- <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* 240, fn 2. In addition, "Two Rites of Spirit Exorcism among the Lahu Nyi (Red Lahu) in Northern Thailand", *J. Asian & African Studies* (Tokyo), 1981, 21, 143-53 and "Shi<sup>-</sup> Nyi: Merit Days among the Lahu Nyi (Red Lahu) of North Thailand", *Anthropos* LXXVIII, 1983, (forthcoming).
- <sup>5</sup> I am able to update my previous estimate of the Lahu population as "some 300 000" ("Hk'aw, K'o<sub>v</sub>Ve", 227) because of new data both from China and from Thailand. The most recent figure for the Lahu population in China is 270 000 ("Population and Major Areas of Distribution of Chinese National Minorities", *Beijing Review*, 9, March 3, 1980, p. 17. Also "List of China's National Minorities", *China Pictorial*, 1, 1981, p. 10). The latest figure I have for Lahu in Thailand is 35 500 (Paul W. Lewis, *Lahus in Thailand*, Chiang Mai, 1980, 12 pp. mimeographed, p.1.). (Lewis *ibid.* estimates the Lahu population of Burma as being between 205 000 and 230 000 and that of Laos as being between 8000 and 10 000. He offers no sources for his information and the figure for Burma is more than double the highest previous estimate of 80 000, also by Lewis [Paul W. Lewis, *The Hill Tribes of Thailand*, Chiang Mai, Faculty of Social Sciences, Chiang Mai University, mimeographed, p. 80]).
- <sup>6</sup> In my "Hk'aw, K'o<sub>v</sub>Ve" (241-2, fn 4), I mentioned that there may be a remnant Lahu community in northern Vietnam as well. These are the people sometimes called Co Sung. A more recent Vietnamese source lists among the "ethnic components" of Vietnam, the La Hu, also known as Khu Xung, Co Xung and Kha Quy, who live in the province of Lai Chau, close to the Yunnanese and Lao borders. ("Danh mục các thành phần dân tộc Việt Nam [Classification of the ethnic components of Viet Nam]", *Dan Tok Hoc [Ethnographic Studies]* 1, 1979, 62). Significant here in the alternative name "Kha Quy", which seems to link these people with the Lahu Shi or Yellow Lahu people, known to their lowland Tai-speaking neighbours as Kwi or Kha Kwi.
- Lewis (*Lahus in Thailand*, 1) states unequivocally that there are Lahu in Vietnam and gives their population as 1500. He cites no source for his information.
- <sup>7</sup> "Hk'aw, K'o<sub>v</sub>Ve", 227-31, 240 fn 2.
- <sup>8</sup> For some general notes on spirit beliefs among the Lahu Nyi people I studied, see my articles (1) "Jaw Te Meh, Jaw<sub>v</sub> Ve: Lahu Nyi (Red Lahu) Rites of Spirit Exorcism in North Thailand", *Anthropos* LXXI, 2, 1976, 377-422, pp. 379-82; (2) "Law<sub>v</sub> Ne<sup>v</sup> Cai<sub>v</sub> Ve: A Lahu Nyi (Red Lahu) Rite to Propitiate the Water Spirit: Five Lahu Texts and an Ethnographic Background", *Baessler-Archiv* XXIV, 1976, 429-52, pp. 435-37; (2) "The Propitiation of the Lightning Spirit in a Lahu Nyi (Red Lahu) Community in North Thailand", *Acta Orientalia* (Copenhagen) XXXVIII, 1977, 209-29, pp. 210-12.
- <sup>9</sup> I use the form "Tai" (T'ai and Dai are other usages) to refer to any group (Shan, Khon Muang, Siamese, Lao, etc.) speaking a Tai language. "Thai" I use to refer either to a citizen of the Kingdom of Thailand or, adjectivally, to something belonging to that kingdom, e.g. "the northern Thai hills".
- <sup>10</sup> For some preliminary remarks on the history of the Lua' or Lawa of north Thailand, see Peter Kunstadter, *The Lua' (Lawa) of Northern Thailand: Aspects of Social Structure, Agriculture, and Religion*, Princeton, Research monograph no. 21, Center of International Studies, Princeton University, 1965, pp. 1-7. Although the Lua' who now live in the mountains do not profess Buddhism, they have a tradition that their people were Buddhists long ago when they lived in the lowlands (*ibid.*, 26). It is possible that some Lua' retained Buddhist beliefs and practices for a time after moving into the mountains, which would account for the upland Buddhist shrines.
- <sup>11</sup> Names in parentheses are those used by Tai and/or Chinese and found extensively in the ethnographic record. Modern practice, however, prefers the use of the people's own ethnonyms.
- <sup>12</sup> Telford arrived in Kentung to take up missionary work "early in 1917" (see his "History of the Kentung Mission", unpublished typescript on file at the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society Headquarters, Valley Forge, Pa., U.S.A.) and was forced to flee his mission site twenty-six years later, in 1942, with the arrival of the Imperial Japanese Army (see his "Return to Burma", *Easterner* (Philadelphia) VI, 3, 1946, 6-11). After the war, in 1946, Telford, by now retired from the mission field and teaching at the Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary, returned to Burma to evaluate for the American Baptist Missionary society the extent of the war damage and the condition of the mission in the immediate post-war period (see his "Return to Burma", also his "Burma Report", a newspaper or magazine clipping on file at the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society's headquarters in Valley Forge, Pa., the name and date of the journal are unrecorded, but the latter is probably 1946).
- <sup>13</sup> J. H. Telford, "Animism in Kentung State", *J. Burma Research Soc.* XXVII, 2, 1937, 86-238.

- <sup>14</sup> Burmese Animism or Animism in Kengtung State, Ph. D. thesis, Edinburgh University.
- <sup>15</sup> This is the numerically predominant Lahu division in Burma and around the area of Pangwai, where Telford's mission station was located. The Lahu Nyi or Red Lahu are found a little further to the south. For a discussion of the divisions of the Lahu, see my "The Divisions of the Lahu People", *J. Siam Soc.* LXII, 2, 1974, 253-68.
- <sup>16</sup> In this work, Telford omits tonal identifications on Lahu words and frequently joins the syllables of a single word, where the standard romanization would separate them.
- <sup>17</sup> See my "A\_ *Ha\_ Mvuh<sup>∇</sup> K'aw Ne<sup>∇</sup> K'o<sup>∇</sup> Ve*: A Lahu Nyi (Red Lahu) Rite of Spirit Propitiation: Lahu Text and Ethnographic Background", *Acta Ethnographica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* XXIX, 1980, 545-9.
- <sup>18</sup> "Animism", 155-6
- <sup>19</sup> Gordon Young, *The Hill Tribes of Northern Thailand*, Bangkok, The Siam Society, 1962, 9 n, maintains that the Lahu Nyi have been separated from the Lahu Na for some 150 years; unfortunately he gives no evidence to support his estimate. Harold M. Young (father of Gordon Young), in his unpublished study, "To the Mountain Tops: A Sojourn Among the Lahu of Asia", n.d. (circa 1972), writes (p. 9) "Most of the Lahu who live in Thailand belong to the 'Lahu Na' group, but there are a few who are called the 'Red Lahu' who are actually the 'Black Lahu' since their language is identical." See also my "Divisions", 260-1, and Lewis' "Lahus in Thailand", pp. 3-4 (wherein he pleads for the term "Red Lahu" to be abandoned).
- <sup>20</sup> I was told that the verb *taw<sup>∇</sup> ve* means "to learn by heart, to remember". The verb *hte<sup>∇</sup> ve* is used for "striking" a match. *Nyi ve* means "to see". But none of this seems to clarify the meaning of the phrase as a whole.
- <sup>21</sup> For a description of the Lahu Nyi notion of *Pi ya<sup>∇</sup>*, see my "*Jaw Te Meh<sup>∇</sup> Jaw<sup>∇</sup> Ve*", 381-2.
- <sup>22</sup> I have recorded this text in its original Lahu and in translation in connexion with the propitiation of the Hill Spirit. See my "Lahu Nyi (Red Lahu) Rites to Propitiate the Hill Spirit: Ethnographic Notes and Lahu Texts", *Asiatische Studien* XXXI, 1, 1977, 55-79, pp. 65-6.
- <sup>23</sup> For some notes on Lahu Nyi ideas about sickness and the efficacy of ritual in dealing with it, see my "Blessing Feasts and Ancestor Propitiation among the Lahu Nyi (Red Lahu)", *J. Siam Soc.* LX, 1, 1972, 345-73, pp. 347-8.
- <sup>24</sup> The *satang* is a Thai coin with a hole in the centre. 100 *satang* make one *baht* (5 U.S.). The older coins are used as weights by the Lahu Nyi in north Thailand. The coin weighs 5 grammes.
- <sup>25</sup> His words were: A- *va<sup>∇</sup> ne<sup>∇</sup> chi yaw<sup>∇</sup> va<sup>∇</sup> suh<sup>∇</sup> daw<sup>∇</sup> ga<sup>∇</sup> ve neh<sup>∇</sup> zuh<sup>∇</sup> daw<sup>∇</sup> ga<sup>∇</sup> ve hke<sup>∇</sup> k'ai ve yo<sup>∇</sup>*. "This A- *va<sup>∇</sup>* spirit, he drinks pig's blood just like others drink whisky".
- <sup>26</sup> As for the Shan text recorded in "*Hk'aw<sup>∇</sup> K'o<sup>∇</sup> Ve*", 233-4, I should point out that I am not myself familiar with the Shan language. I recorded this text with the help of a Lahu Christian, originally from Burma. This man, besides being literate in Lahu, also knew spoken Shan. The Shan text was thus recorded in the standard Lahu romanization. I do not know how accurately Shan can be rendered in this script designed for the Lahu language. But I am fairly certain that the Shan of this prayer is that of a Lahu speaker and not of a native Shan.
- <sup>27</sup> As in all my previous presentations of Lahu Nyi texts (see "*Hk'aw<sup>∇</sup> K'o<sup>∇</sup> Ve*", 240, fn. 2), I have broken up the ones given here into verses. This is to facilitate reference between the original and my English translation. Such boundaries are not recognized by the Lahu themselves.
- <sup>28</sup> From the use of the phrase *shu<sup>∇</sup> cao tan<sup>∇</sup> lai<sup>∇</sup>* "everybody" or "all of you" in verse 2, it seems clear that we are dealing with a plurality of A- *va<sup>∇</sup>* spirits, rather than a single supernatural entity. But in ordinary conversation, Lahu Nyi informants are very vague about number. Whether there is one A- *va<sup>∇</sup>* spirit per abandoned Buddhist shrine or several is not a matter which concerns them.
- <sup>29</sup> Words in brackets are absent, but understood, in the original text. Their omission in an English translation would obscure the intended meaning.
- <sup>30</sup> In referring to the Buddhist shrine, two words are used in the text. One is *va<sup>∇</sup>* or *va<sup>∇</sup> ha<sup>∇</sup>*, probably from *viharn*. The other is *caw<sup>∇</sup>* which comes from the Burmese, *chawng*.
- <sup>31</sup> Tai peoples (including Shan, Yuan (Khon Muang), Siamese and, I suppose, others) often cook food by stuffing it into green bamboo sections which are then placed directly into the ashes of a fire. This style of cooking, although not unknown, is much less frequent among Lahu. It is appropriate that a spirit associated with Buddhist lowlanders be offered food prepared in this manner. Once again, this tends to conform to the Tai rather than Wa or Lawa identity of this spirit.
- <sup>32</sup> Most traditional Lahu Nyi payments are stated in silver rupee coins but paid in Thai currency. There is by now a traditional conversion rate of six *baht* to one rupee - "traditional" because it takes no account of the rise in value of silver. An actual Indian silver rupee coin is now worth about a hundred *baht*.
- <sup>33</sup> In fact, no fowl are offered. En\_ Lon<sup>-</sup> said these were simply for "sound effect", in Lahu *na sha ve* "easy, pleasant, to hear".

- <sup>34</sup> When a spirit like the  $A^- va_\vee ne^\vee$  attacks a mortal, the external sign is said to be physical sickness. But, Lahu say, the real cause of the sickness is damage to or loss of the person's spiritual counterpart, his or her  $aw_\vee ha$  or "soul". As the text makes clear, it is thought on this occasion that the  $A^- va_\vee ne^\vee$  has captured its victim's soul and the spirit specialist is now asking for its return. The spirit is to be recompensed with the various offerings prepared for it.
- <sup>35</sup> This is typical exaggeration in order to please the spirit. As noted, a single set of male and a single set of female clothing is all that is offered.
- <sup>36</sup> The offering of both cooked and uncooked pork once again links the  $A^- va_\vee$  spirit with the Tai peoples. Among the Yuan or Northern Thai people, uncooked (but fermented) pork is a favourite delicacy. Lahu Nyi themselves do not usually eat pork in this style.
- <sup>37</sup> *I.e.* "Do not allow this woman to die and so to be separated from her husband and children."
- <sup>38</sup> The pretense of humbling oneself before a spirit is a common Lahu ploy to obtain a boon from that supernatural being.
- <sup>39</sup> Eh\_ Lon's actual words were:  $K'ai pa\_ va_\wedge sha\_ ca^\vee hpeh_\wedge ve yo_\vee, va_\wedge sha\_ yu_\vee k'aw_\wedge la ma^\vee hpeh_\wedge$ . "The people who go may eat the pork; taking the pork home is not allowed."